



# Talking Points

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## National Background

- Purpose is to help localities reverse economic and physical decline in traditional downtown and neighborhood business districts
- Developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the 1970s to address decline of the traditional downtown neighborhood due to suburbanization:
  - 1977-1980: Piloted in three towns in 3 Midwestern states'
  - 1980: The Main Street program was introduced in six states
  - Success of program led to formation of National Main Street Center in 1980s (relationship with states is contractual)
  - Celebrates 30 years of Main Street in 2015;
- While the Trust was interested in saving buildings, they knew they could only do so by returning them to productivity with a revived or new purpose. The Main Street program is an example of economic development in the context of historic preservation;
- Strategy is ***Four Point Main Street Approach***<sup>™</sup> based on:
  - **Organization**—building broad-based partnerships to manage the revitalization effort
  - **Promotion**—creating and marketing a positive image for downtown
  - **Design**—improving the physical environment of downtown
  - **Economic Vitality**—strengthening and expanding downtown's existing economic assets
- Now implemented in more than 2,200 communities in 40+ states, plus neighborhood programs in Boston, San Diego, Baltimore, Portland and Washington D.C.
- More than \$65.6 billion of public and private investment nationwide to date in Main Street communities.

Additional information  
is available on the  
National Main Street  
Center website at  
[www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org).

## **State Background**

- Virginia was the 15<sup>th</sup> state to become part of program. Virginia Main Street® was introduced in 1985:
  - Virginia currently has 29 designated Main Street communities
  - Communities are competitively selected
  - There are also more than 70+ DHCD Commercial District Affiliates selected in a noncompetitive process
- Virginia Main Street® is housed in the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Visit our website at : [www.dhcd.virginia.gov/MainStreet](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/MainStreet)
- Main Street® program state staff provide: training, technical assistance, networking opportunities, access to state and national experts, customized design assistance and ongoing public relations and marketing
- Economic impact statistics from program inception in 1985 through year-end 2015:
  - \*\$897 million of private investment in building rehabilitations
  - \*7,713 building rehabilitation projects
  - \*6,036 new, expanded or retained businesses
  - \*19,823 new or retained jobs
  - \*1,016,419 volunteer hours (1992-2015), valued at over \$23 million
- The buildings of many Main Streets® are significant in the sense they contributed to the development of the local community rather than being of national, state, or regional importance. They are significant as a collection of buildings representative of the evolution of the American commercial center and its impact on the local community.

## **Virginia Main Street® Communities**

**Abingdon** (2007)  
**Altavista** (2007)  
**Ashland** (2013)  
**Bedford** (1985)  
**Berryville** (1992)  
**Blackstone** (2007)  
**Bristol** (2011)  
**Culpeper** (1988)  
**Farmville** (2011)  
**Danville** (2016)  
**Franklin** (1985)  
**Fredericksburg** (2013)  
**Gloucester** (2016)  
**Harrisonburg** (2004)  
**Hopewell** (2011)  
**Lexington (2016)**  
**Luray** (2004)  
**Lynchburg** (2000)  
**Manassas** (1988)  
**Marion** (1995)  
**Martinsville** (1995)  
**Orange** (1992)  
**St. Paul** (2011)  
**South Boston** (2004)  
**Staunton** (1995)  
**Warrenton** (1989)  
**Wytheville (2016)**  
**Waynesboro** (2000)  
**Winchester** (1985)

## **Economic Benefits of Downtown**

- Older buildings have unique and irreplaceable historic architecture.
- Downtown is often the community's largest employment center and a significant contributor to the local tax base.
- Revitalization encourages economic growth in an area of the community already served by infrastructure.
- Downtown businesses tend to be locally owned and thus give much more back to the community economically.
- For every \$100 spent at a locally owned business, \$68 stays within the community. For every \$100 spent at a national chain, only \$43 stays within the community.
- Renovating downtown commercial storefronts has been shown in four different statewide studies to result in long-term increase in sales; also employ local contractors using locally purchased materials.
- With new construction 50 percent of cost is labor and 50 percent materials; with rehabilitation 70 percent is labor (usually local) and 30 percent materials.
- The Iowa Main Street<sup>®</sup> program estimates that for every year a downtown building sits empty, it costs the community over \$222,000 in reduced economic activity; and every vacant upper-story apartment space costs the community roughly \$40,000 in reduced economic activity.

## **Downtown Investment Pays Off**

- For the **residents**.... more jobs, goods, services and housing
- For the **business person**.... more customers & sales
- For the **visitor**...more reasons to visit, spend more & stay longer
- For **elected officials & city leaders**... increased real property & sales tax revenue, industrial recruitment

### **Community Involvement**

- Main Street® works through the use of local public/private partnerships
  - Making best use of the skills and abilities of the government and nonprofit sectors;
  - Collaboration among private businesses and individuals;
- The program works in Virginia because communities use local initiative and resources to develop revitalization strategies following the Main Street Four Point Approach®;
- Use of volunteers is cost effective and ensures that residents have a say in downtown's development and a commitment to make it work. (As of 2015, volunteer time in Virginia is valued at \$24.49 per hour.).
- Virginia Main Street® supports local efforts through programs and services that strengthen the local Main Street® program
  - Training to assist with development of the local program, its volunteers, and paid staff;
  - Conferences and workshops provide networking and learning opportunities for organizational development;
  - National Main Street Center® membership offers a national network for best practices and programmatic support for volunteers and staff;
  - Grant and scholarship incentives assist with funding for Main Street® projects, conference attendance, and programs.

### **There's No Place Like Downtown!**

- Each Downtown is different. Its architecture, business mix, and character define its sense of place and identity. Preserving your Downtown's distinctive cityscape preserves its uniqueness;
- Economic revitalization provides jobs and business ownership opportunities for local residents, particularly youth who may otherwise leave the community in search of employment;
- Renewed vitality enhances community "quality of life" with more cultural and recreational opportunities, better schools, better libraries, and more housing options – all in a setting of heritage preserved;
- Downtown is “everyone's neighborhood”. Through Main Street, Downtown invites everyone to live, shop, work, and play Downtown.